



STATE SENATOR PAT KREITLOW

Senate Committee on Judiciary, Insurance and Campaign Finance Reform Senator Pat Kreitlow

Testimony in favor of SB 658
April 1, 2010

Thank you Chairperson Taylor, committee members, for hearing testimony on SB 658 today.

As you all know, last November the legislature passed one of the most significant campaign finance reform bills in our state's history, Act 89 - the Impartial Justice Bill. The legislation, which strengthened Wisconsin's public finance laws for Supreme Court campaigns, was signed into law by Governor Doyle on December 15th.

A number of concerns were raised by the Government Accountability Board (GAB) during the implementation of Act 89, concerns and complications that were unforeseen by the drafters while the bill was being considered for passage. SB 658 addresses those concerns, which are mostly technical in nature. We've invited staff from GAB to join me in testifying today and to explain the need for SB 658. Here is a list of what those changes entail:

SB 658 – what does it do?

Advances the effective to resolve unforeseen administrative complications:

- SB 658 advances the effective date from December 1, 2010, to May 1, 2010
- Advancing the effective date would resolve many administrative (GAB's) complications
- This addresses the administration of the Act's provisions and treatment of contributions raised in 2010, rather than have the law kick in only during the last portion of the campaign period.

Eliminates a Double Penalty:

- SB 658 eliminates a double penalty for exceeding the allowable seed money contribution and qualifying contribution limits
- This appears to have been a drafting error and was not part of the initial intent
- Unless we address this issue, Act 89 would require a participating candidate to transfer any excess contributions over those limits to the GAB and the public benefit would be reduced by the amount of the excess contributions.

Clarifies intent:

- SB 658 also clarifies that participating candidates cannot exceed either the seed money or the qualifying contribution limits, rather than the aggregate of those limits. The current language conflicts with other provisions in the bill
- SB 658 cleans up language regarding the disbursement limit for participating candidates, and the effective dates for the tax check off and appropriations and transfers the current balance in the justice account of the WECF to the new Democracy Trust Fund. With the current language of Act 89, there was a possibility that there would be no funds available until after the 2011 Supreme Court election.

I want to thank GAB for their work in both discovering these issues and in finding ways to address them. I also want to thank my co-author Rep. Hintz for his work in bringing this legislation forward and for his continued leadership on the issue of campaign finance reform. Thank for your consideration of this bill and I strongly urge you to move it forward as soon possible so that the Impartial Justice Bill can be fully implemented as intended in time for the next Supreme Court campaign.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "PAT KREITLOW". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Pat Kreitlow
State Senator – 23rd District